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Assurance from Hun Sen

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - The Prime Minister has received a letter from Cambodian co-Prime Minister Hun Sen assuring that agreements earlier annulled by Prince Norodom Ranariddh for RM3.25 billion worth of projects signed with Ariston Sdn Bhd are legitimate.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Hun Sen wrote that there was no problem with the agreements.

"I believe the Cambodian Government could resolve its domestic problems. They (Cambodians) can resolve this among themselves.

"I think the Cambodian leadership is responsible, but they have differing views like any other country.

"We hope this matter can be resolved," he told reporters after a meeting with German President Roman Herzog at the Regent Hotel.

Dr Mahathir was commenting on a report that Hun Sen wrote to him to condemn the recent annulment of several agreements with Ariston by co-Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh.

Hun Sen said he was "disappointed and shocked" by Ranariddh's decision to declare three agreements with Ariston "null and void."

Hun Sen wrote that Ariston had become a victim of politics and irresponsible behaviour of Ranariddh.

The deals were still legitimate, he assured Dr Mahathir.

Ranariddh wrote to Ariston chief executive officer Chen Lip Keong on Feb 26, informing him that the deal to lease land for a large resort and 18-hole golf course and an airport concession agreement were "null and void" because they were improperly signed by a rival politician.

The agreements were part of Ariston's US\$1.3 billion (RM3.25 billion) plan to develop the southern town of Sihanoukville into a major tourist destination.

Dr Mahathir, when asked whether the Cabinet had discussed the diplomatic row with Singapore, said it was not discussed.

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